

*Interviewer:* Were you working down in the Logan field or you were working \_\_\_\_\_?

*Interviewee:* No, I wasn't working there; in this field here. I never worked on the Logan field. It wasn't \_\_\_\_\_.

*Interviewer:* What coal company were you working for here?

*Interviewee:* Well, I worked with the Ridgeview people, I worked with Atlas, and I worked for the Ashford Coal Company, and I worked for the Easley Coal Company. I worked for a lot of companies. \_\_\_\_\_ Coal Company up here. I worked some in Kingston and Paint Creek and some \_\_\_\_\_ on \_\_\_\_\_. And Rye Creek down here. But the side \_\_\_\_\_ - I'd get out of bed before dawn now, you know, when I worked there. You got to be up, you know, except now those people have \_\_\_\_\_ till now.

*Interviewer:* Well, that's the \_\_\_\_\_ people.

*Interviewee:* Mm-hmm. Yeah, they're \_\_\_\_\_.

*Interviewer:* Right.

*Interviewee:* Twenty-five, 30 years, maybe longer before they went to \_\_\_\_\_. \_\_\_\_\_.

*Interviewer:* Mm-hmm. Those were all union mines when you were working there, weren't they?

*Interviewee:* Yeah. I never worked in a scab mine. I wouldn't work in them.

*Interviewer:* That's right, that's – you told me that – and after the Battle of Blair Mountain that you quit the mines and went out until you could work under contract.

*Interviewee:* I did.

*Interviewer:* Mm-hmm.

*Interviewee:* That's-come out in '21 and never went back till '34 or '35. So I mean I got much more from had a contract and didn't \_\_\_\_\_ look like anymore in those mines, you know? It was about 14 years.

*Interviewer:* Was the mine where you working in '21, did that go non-union and broke contract with the union?

*Interviewee:* Yeah, mm-hmm. I was at Easley Coal Company. He was a good man – Easley's a good man to work for and he's helped me, said, "Why don't you come on, go to work?" He said, "I'm going to unionize you." I said, "No, you ain't. You're not a union mine." And he says, "I used to be a \_\_\_\_\_ man on the NAW and I belonged to a union. I am going to unionize you." And he said if I signed up with the United Mine Workers of \_\_\_\_\_ Coal Operators Association put me out of business." I said, "You'll be out anyway before long." And he was. Broke all these little companies up, you know?

*Interviewer:* Mm-hmm.

*Interviewee:* Fighting the union. And big companies, right, and he was with the heads of it, didn't bother them.

*Interviewer:* So a lot of the little ones went out of business trying to fight the union, and the bigger companies that had more money to hire these thugs and all, they did–

*Interviewee:* Oh yeah. They worked – I suspect they lost money, you know, but kept working. Now when they're striking here I can't prove it, but it was the end of the talk. I came \_\_\_\_\_ to get the moonshine, you know? If they don't steal the stuff and put it under peoples' houses and mess with the moonshine. Still they don't take them to jail, don't \_\_\_\_\_.

*Interviewer:* So if it was a good union man they'd do that too?

*Interviewee:* Yeah. Mm-hmm. Oh yeah, they – to be a scab, they'd do anything for him, you know?

*Interviewer:* Gee, I never heard that before. So you could take the moonshine and put it right underneath the house there and–

*Interviewee:* Put the still under the house.

*Interviewer:* And then get it back \_\_\_\_\_ ?

*Interviewee:* Then go back and raid them, find the still, and arrest them, take them all to jail.

*Female 1:* Ernie.

*Interviewee:* Is she gone?

*Female 1:* No, the car's sitting there yet.

*Interviewee:* Tell her if she needs some water I'll get her some. \_\_\_\_\_.  
\_\_\_\_\_.

*Interviewer:* Did they do other kinds of things to get the union organized as well, or with the—

*Interviewee:* Oh, they'd arrest you for putting anything in them now, the police would. He had lots, like you said, and he wasn't arrested or nothing. I don't know whether you ever heard of Mother Jones or not, have you?

*Interviewer:* Yeah, I've heard a lot about her.

*Interviewee:* She used to come through \_\_\_\_\_. I told her she could get their dander up, you know. Sometimes they \_\_\_\_\_ fight her too, and some arrested and I don't know.

*Interviewer:* Did you ever see her speak?

*Interviewee:* Yeah. Mm-hmm. Went up to \_\_\_\_\_, you know. She was talking to some fellow, strikebreakers they called him, scab. Didn't see what she said before he hit him and knocked him \_\_\_\_\_ from his \_\_\_\_\_ reckon nearly, you know I thought he would be in one war, but it finally got stopped.

*Interviewer:* She was a good speaker?

*Interviewee:* Oh, she was. She was.

*Interviewer:* I hear she talks pretty dirty.

*Interviewee:* Oh, yeah, she called – her mouth \_\_\_\_\_ raises everything, you know, but a gentleman.

*Interviewer:* She never stayed at your house, did she, when she was coming through?

*Interviewee:* Huh?

*Interviewer:* She never stayed at your house, did she?

*Interviewee:* No. No. She come over – she'd speak at Potomac; that's up the river here three or four miles. And a lot of places – the operators wouldn't allow her on their property, you know. You don't get a

\_\_\_\_\_ 'fore she can speak to speak to. I don't know why she hasn't spoke up now. She's not. I don't understand if she didn't \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_. And she was out at the Lambert.

*Interviewer:* You said you used to have big meetings up at Ellis. Were they union meetings?

*Interviewee:* He was a union man, but they wasn't on company property, you know.

*Interviewer:* Mm-hmm. This was when the union still wasn't recognized by the operators. They used to go up there and meet them private – secret kind of like?

*Interviewee:* Well, sometimes it was, but sometimes they'd have some good speakers there, you know, and they'd have a big crowd from all around, you know? That is union men, and of course sometimes the company sent a \_\_\_\_\_ until they didn't know what he said and done and know. You know, we brought them \_\_\_\_\_ kind of men.

*Interviewer:* What kinds of things did you talk about at the meetings?

*Interviewee:* Well, we were wanting \_\_\_\_\_ up, not work, you know, standing for their rights. They tried to feed them. Did feed – sent a lot of grub in and fed a lot of them, you know, and \_\_\_\_\_ were given. I don't know, one of them had beans and flour and bacon, stuff like that. I said, "Huh, I don't want none," I said, "but somebody probably got a family. I ain't got no family." And they'll let them stand alone \_\_\_\_\_ feet. But people you know \_\_\_\_\_ now.

So I'm working three days and three days on the union. Didn't go back. Told her, "Oh, I'm comfortable. I've got a family." You've got a broke cause the wages down so you couldn't make a living.

*Interviewer:* I guess it's just pretty hard to get everybody together at one time to go out.

*Interviewee:* Oh, you couldn't. There's always somebody that caught the men up.

*Interviewer:* Now when you would go out on strike wouldn't the district headquarters help you out with rent checks and wouldn't they send food down here and money?

*Interviewee:* Yeah.

*Interviewer:* Relief checks.

*Interviewee:* Mm-hmm. Now I never got none of it. I told them, I said, "Give it to these men that's got families and let them stay at home." I never did, you know, draw any of that, a lot of this stuff.

*Interviewer:* Now one thing I was hoping you'd tell me about, of course in '19 and '21, after the Battle of Blair Mountain a lot of these mines around here went scab mines. I was wondering if you knew anything about that battle, what happened up there?

*Interviewee:* Well, I was up there, but I \_\_\_\_\_ couldn't \_\_\_\_\_ sight of men. My whole row was full of men, but I don't know what happened. I never seen nobody killed or nothing, but every once in a while, they'd hear one being killed. But I never seen one. I got \_\_\_\_\_ stay for four or five days.

*Interviewer:* You joined—

*Interviewee:* 'Cause the soldiers come in and that broke us up, you know. I lost a good gun, high-powered rifle up there. *[Laughs]*

*Interviewer:* Wow.

*Interviewee:* I wouldn't have took \$100.00 for it. But I couldn't come out of there with it. Them soldiers take it, you know. And I left it up with a feller, and I don't know, he moved right away, and I didn't quite \_\_\_\_\_ never — I never got the gun, and I know that.

*Interviewer:* I understand there are a lot of guns still up there. I met one guy that told me he was going to take me up to the mountain and show me where a whole lot of guns were hidden yet.

*Interviewee:* Well, there — I'm satisfied they're there if the rust ain't eat 'em up, you know?

*Interviewer:* Mm-hmm. Oh, they wouldn't be any good anymore, but—

*Interviewee:* Oh no. Uh-uh.

*Interviewer:* —at least you could see them.

*Interviewee:* Oh, they had all kinds of guns and — the union took over this railroad and the train. They'd run a train up there every two or

three hours, getting guns, \_\_\_\_\_, overalls and blankets and stuff. Anything they could get, you know? We called it the high-powered train. And they have plenty of high-powers on it, too. You know, it's just regular \_\_\_\_\_ of the two.

*Interviewer:* They just took the train over?

*Interviewee:* Yeah. Mm-hmm.

*Interviewer:* Is this one that – wasn't it the train that ran down between Charleston and Clothier down there?

*Interviewee:* Well, I don't know. I think maybe it did. You know, but they didn't have the old \_\_\_\_\_ cars; they just had flat cars, you know, because \_\_\_\_\_ load on there. None of them didn't want to go; afraid not to go, you know? They'd stop all these stores, just went and robbed what they could from 'em: shells, guns, anything that they had, you know? Well, it lasted for about a week anyway.

*Interviewer:* Did most of the miners who were working around here in Boone County go down with the rest of them on the march?

*Interviewee:* Not until striking days, you know. Regardless, a few of them went out in the woods and hid, laid out around them. Wouldn't go, was afraid to go, you know. Afraid to be seen afterwards. And so they went \_\_\_\_\_. [Laughs] And on the land.

*Interviewer:* Well, you know something that happened down in Logan, on the other side of it, too, a lot of guys working down there in the mines and Sheriff Don Chafin would come around and he would try to get them to go up on the mountain and fight, you know? And they wouldn't go up there and fight with their union brothers 'cause, of course, they were secretly members of the union too. So they just said that they wouldn't go up there and they'd go out and hide out in the woods somewhere, you know, and wait till the whole thing kind of blew over.

*Interviewee:* That's why they didn't care. I mean you was talking this morning that that used to be organized. I never know organized, but I have been chairman of the union, president of the local, they call it. But I never was no organizer. And I wanted to talk to everybody in the seat, of course, trying to keep them \_\_\_\_\_ to try to make it. But I'm just having the job of organizer, but I never did, you know?

*Interviewer:* So you were telling me that at the time of the battle up on the mountain there that you were all out on strike here.

*Interviewee:* Yeah.

*Interviewer:* Was this to get the same agreement that was prevailing in Illinois and Ohio and Pennsylvania fields? Or do you remember what the issues in that strike were?

*Interviewee:* They just wanted to recognize the union here. I don't know what it was up there.

*Interviewer:* Mm-hmm. Just to get recognition.

*Interviewee:* Yeah.

*Interviewer:* Yeah.

*Interviewee:* They had the same trouble up there that we did down here, didn't they?

*Interviewer:* Yeah.

*Interviewee:* It's been so long, I can't—

*Interviewer:* They had that trouble all over.

*Interviewee:* Oh yes. Canada too I reckon, didn't it?

*Interviewer:* I don't know too much about Canada. *[Laughs]*

*Interviewee:* No, I don't either, but there are a lot of union mines in Canada and I know — I don't know whereabouts. I've been to Canada several times, but would've done the \_\_\_\_\_ mines, but I've never seen them.

*Interviewer:* So were you involved in some of the fighting up there on the mountain? It was — was it pretty much just people sniping at each other from behind trees and like that, or?

*Interviewee:* Oh yes. Don Chapin's \_\_\_\_\_ was on top of it, you know. And that's the problem on this side; we we're trying to get up there. I don't think they did; I never did. I know they're shooting and having this wild row right down the hill, someone shooting, you know, with a machine gun. Don had an airplane come in there and try to drop a bomb on us, you know. And they dropped it, oh, about close to \_\_\_\_\_ up the river right out there. And then \_\_\_\_\_ and they went and \_\_\_\_\_ tied it up. It was a piece of pipe, six-inch piece

about that long, roll of maybe cotton, roll of buckshot and first one thing and the other one. It had everything in it, you know, but didn't have the roll. I don't know what could've happened if it might've went off, but it didn't.

*Interviewer:* Maybe the man who made it was on your side.

*Interviewee:* No.

*Interviewer:* [Laughs] You think—

*Interviewee:* I don't know who loaded – fixed the thing up, but it had \_\_\_\_\_ and everything to it. I don't know it didn't blow. None of \_\_\_\_\_. Oh, it went into the mountain four or five feet \_\_\_\_\_, you know?

*Interviewer:* They just must not have been too smart when they made it up.

*Interviewee:* Well, whoever made it maybe just \_\_\_\_\_ wanted it, but no \_\_\_\_\_, you know. I don't know who done it.

*Interviewer:* You know, one thing I'd really like to have you explain to me, it always kind of seemed to me when I talk to people that you must've been so angry when the troops came in there and made you turn around, especially when you were just, you know, doing so well. Just about to make it into Logan County there and having forced to go back like that. How did you feel when you had to get on that train and go back?

*Interviewee:* I couldn't hardly tell you now. We didn't want to turn back, but \_\_\_\_\_ long gone, and so they had a whole regiment of soldiers in there. Anyways, the regiment I served in during World War I, you know, Florida \_\_\_\_\_ Troop.

*Interviewer:* Is that why you went and obeyed their orders? You just felt it was like the US Army and that it was—

*Interviewee:* Well, I know they was bigger than we was, you know. And that was the best thing to do. And it probably was. I \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ fighting the United States government, you know. They're too big to fight. A little \_\_\_\_\_, little \_\_\_\_\_, you know.

We had it so bad here for a while that it's pretty much ready to eat \_\_\_\_\_, you know. The guys come in every to begin with the drilling and laying the pipelines and \_\_\_\_\_ have a team in here. You went to work on it, you bought a another team \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ and that's a violent end for most \_\_\_\_\_ teams, so to stay with that



11 years, you know. Then that Depression come on and that stopped all of that. And they sold the \_\_\_\_\_ line. I \_\_\_\_\_ what reminds me of that. I get checked for black lung from working at the mines.

*Interviewer:* You on your miner's pension too?

*Interviewee:* No. No. I had not enough time \_\_\_\_\_ with started with I could've got it. But later on they said you had to have 20 years, and the last 25 of mine was over such a long period of time they cut me off, you know?

A lot of it – you should write a book about all this stuff–

*Interviewer:* Oh, we weren't going to write a book, just a few newspaper stories. But we were interested, especially in hearing about Logan and Mingo Counties. You didn't know any of the men that worked down there, did you?

*Interviewee:* Around Logan?

*Interviewer:* Mm-hmm.

*Interviewee:* No, not at that time. I know some was working at the mine back in \_\_\_\_\_. It's not like the one was - \_\_\_\_\_, two of the mines. They're what are called mud portals in Logan County.

*Interviewer:* Oh yeah, I know where that is.

*Interviewee:* Do you?

*Interviewer:* Mm-hmm.

*Interviewee:* Yeah, that's what we have now. I think they're both retired.

*Interviewer:* You don't know Spencer Mullins over there, do you?

*Interviewee:* No, but there used to be a Spencer Mullins here. He was a sawmill man. I don't whether he ever worked in mines or not.

*Interviewer:* Because the reason I was told to come over here is I was down in Medford last week talking to Spencer Mullins and his wife, Laura. And they said that they knew you, so maybe they knew you from somewhere you forgot. I don't know what it is.

*Interviewee:* Well, I'll call little woman and maybe she knows it.

*[End of Audio]*